

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600  
7 June 1966

ARMY and DOS review(s) completed.

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
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# HIGHLIGHTS

Buddhist leaders, including the moderate faction under Tam Chau, are continuing to demand the removal of Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu, as the price of ending the present crisis. Although Saigon is generally free of Buddhist street agitation, the situation in Hue remains tense, and Buddhist obstructionism is spreading to other towns in I and II Corps.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
Reinforced company-strength North Vietnamese regulars suffer heavy losses in encounter with US forces in Kontum Province (Para. 1). US 25th Infantry Division forces destroy major Viet Cong grenade factory and capture large weapons cache during Operation WAKIKI in Hau Nghia Province (Para. 2). Communists launch recoilless rifle attack on US 1st Air Cavalry Division base at An Khe (Para. 3).

Further deployments of Communist forces for possible attack on Pleiku city revealed (Para. 7-8).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:  
Buddhist leaders, including Tam Chau who reappeared in his capacity as Buddhist Institute chairman today, continue to declare that the "struggle" will persist until a change in government leadership (Paras. 1-4). A Buddhist-called strike was in effect in Hue today, and the new tactic of clogging the streets with altars is being copied in other nearby cities (Paras. 5-6). Exhortations of non-violent defensive tactics being broadcast to Buddhist followers over a clandestine "struggle" radio in the Hue area may be related to troop movements from Da Nang in preparation for an operation tomorrow against the Viet Cong near Hue (Paras. 7-8).

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III, Military Developments in North Vietnam.

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COMUSMACV reports that more North Vietnamese troops have infiltrated South Vietnam thus far during 1966 than in any previous year to date (Paras. 2-3).

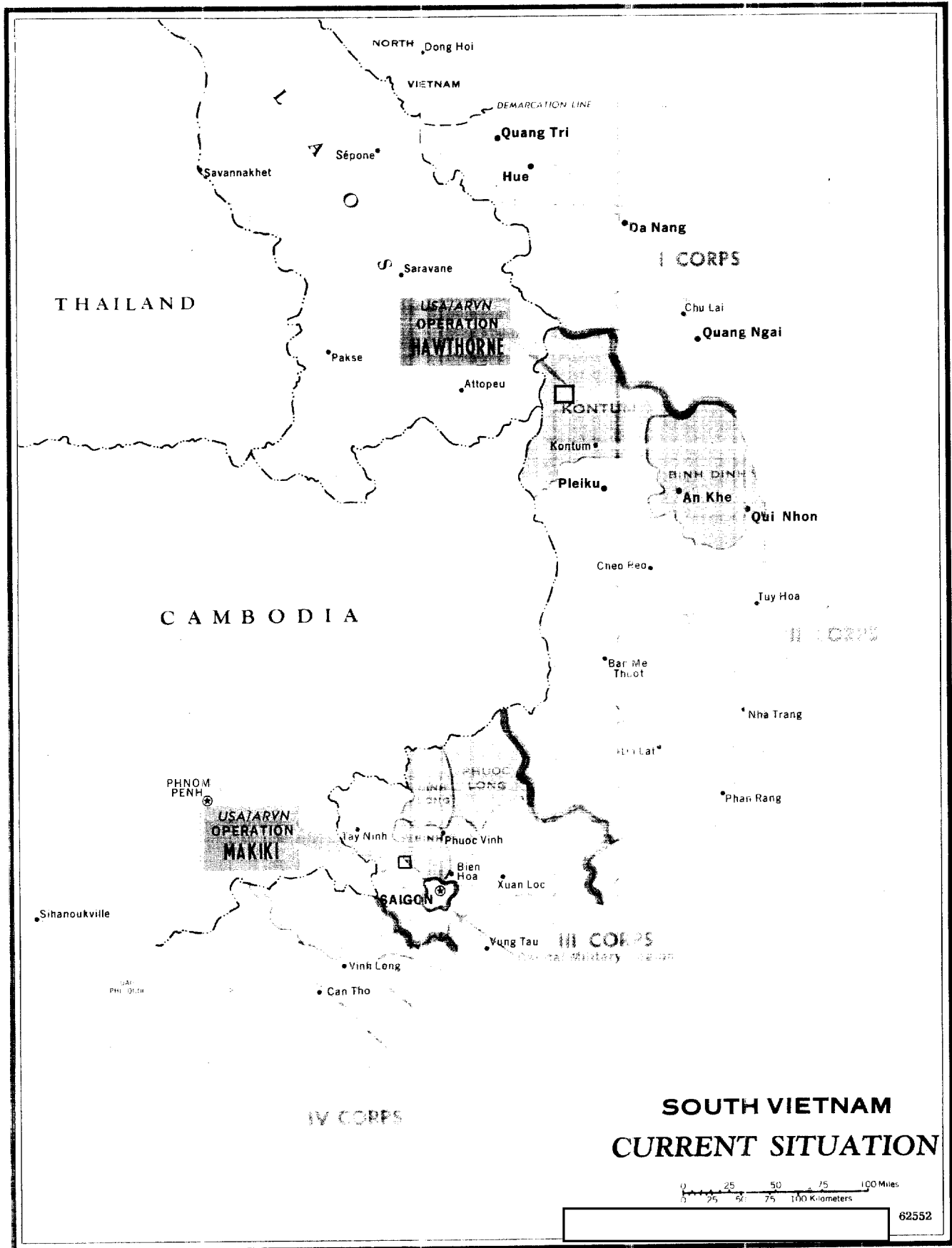
IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: The Polish ICC representative, reporting on his recent trip to Hanoi, has informed Ambassador Lodge of alleged North Vietnamese willingness for conversations--presumably with the US (Paras. 1-2). The ICC is to convene more frequently in Hanoi, reportedly at North Vietnam's initiative (Para. 3).

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# I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A reinforced North Vietnamese Army (NVA) company last night attacked two companies of the US 101st Airborne Brigade conducting Operation HAWTHORNE with heavy mortar, automatic weapons, and small-arms fire. The battle continued for more than six hours with close-in fighting often taking place. US Air Force jet aircraft raked the attacking force with bombs, rockets, and machine guns and flew a total of 64 sorties. More than 80 enemy troops were killed. Initial reports of friendly casualties indicate three Americans killed and 21 wounded. Operation HAWTHORNE is a combined US/ARVN search-and-destroy ground sweep which began on 2 June in Kontum Province about 50 miles northwest of Pleiku city.

2. Early yesterday, elements of the US 25th Infantry Division participating in Operation WAKIKI encountered a heavily booby-trapped grenade factory approximately 35 miles northwest of Saigon. Twenty-six Americans were wounded by the exploding booby traps and 160 of the devices were destroyed. Also uncovered was a large cache of Viet Cong arms wrapped in plastic bags and hidden underwater. The captured weapons included 81 rifles, 26 submachine guns, 24 automatic weapons, and 24 rocket launchers.

3. Communist guerrillas attacked the base camp of the US 1st Cavalry Division at An Khe in central Binh Dinh Province yesterday with eight rounds of 57-mm. recoilless rifle fire. The assault on the largest helicopter base in South Vietnam was launched from mountainous jungles which surround the huge base. Two US soldiers were wounded in the attack; however, there was no damage to base facilities or equipment. A reaction force was immediately dispatched, but no contact was made with the enemy. The attack was the second within a month and US commanders have ordered anti-guerrilla security stepped up throughout the region.

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Further Deployment of Communist Forces for Possible  
Attack on Pleiku City

7. Montagnards in Pleiku Province were recently forced to travel to Cambodia to obtain rice for the Viet Cong. While there, the montagnards talked to Viet Cong soldiers located in a large base area which reportedly contained many houses, one of which was large enough for approximately 400 laborers. The source reported having seen approximately 4,000 men whom he said belonged to the 42nd and 33rd NVA Regiments. He further stated that these forces were to be reinforced by three additional regiments to launch attacks on US troops in the Pleiku area.

8. This is the first report since last March of the 42nd Regiment. A recent captive has stated, however, that the headquarters of the 33rd Regiment was in the approximate location mentioned by the montagnards. The three additional regiments mentioned by the captive that are to attack Pleiku city may be the 18B, 32nd, and the 66th Regiments.

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## II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Buddhists give every indication of continuing their campaign for the removal of Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu and of rejecting the expansion of the Directorate as a political solution. Although Saigon remains relatively free of agitation, the situation in Hue remains touchy with Buddhist obstructionist tactics spreading to other towns in the area.

### Saigon

2. Thich Tam Chau returned to Saigon today and addressed a crowd of some 5,000 at the Buddhist Institute late in the day, his first public appearance since his resignation as Institute chairman was rejected. In what appears on the surface to be an effort to rally moderate Buddhists, Chau announced dissolution of the Vietnamese Buddhist Forces (VBF), the apparatus dominated by militants for implementing Buddhist political decisions. Chau stated, however, that the VBF would be reconstituted as the "Committee to Defend Buddhism," a name in keeping with the present Tri Quang line in Hue that Buddhism itself is under government attack.

3. Moreover, preliminary accounts of the Institute rally, at which both Chau and Thich Ho Giac spoke, indicate that the two are now taking a harder public line than they did prior to their attempted resignations. Chau reportedly declared that the "struggle" would continue until Thieu and Ky are removed, and Giac reportedly stated that the "struggle" would be widened. Institute leaders are reported to have scheduled a press conference for 8 June.

4. Several hundred monks and nuns held a funeral procession in Saigon on 7 June for one of the recent Buddhist self-immolators. Some 30 students attempting to join the procession were arrested.

### Hue

5. A general strike called by the Buddhists in Hue today was apparently entirely effective among

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commercial and other nongovernmental elements, and partially effective among local civil servants. Buddhist altars remained blocking the main thoroughfares again today. The government thus far has taken no action to remove them other than to broadcast appeals for their removal from low-flying aircraft. Press reports, however, state that Tri Quang, after conferring with 1st Division commander General Nhuan, has agreed to remove roadblocks to permit passage of troops in the city. The press claims that prior to this conference, Nhuan--returning from a Directorate meeting in Saigon--had denounced Quang as a "Communist" and threatened to arrest him.

6. The Buddhist tactic of congesting streets with altars spread today to other cities in I and II Corps, following an appeal by Tri Quang over the clandestine "Voice of Buddhist Salvation" radio believed located in a Hue pagoda. Some 300 altars clogged the streets of Da Nang early on 7 June, but by afternoon most of them had been removed at the urging of local police. US consular reports, however, indicate that the new disruptive tactic has been employed effectively in Qui Nhon, preventing access to the port area, and to a lesser extent in Quang Tri and Pleiku cities.

7. The Buddhist radio has been exhorting monks, nuns, and youths to remain near the altars, warning that they may be attacked by the Saigon government and the US. It has also called on Buddhist troops to prepare a stand of noncooperation with the government, and has asked monks and nuns to request admittance to jails should the "struggle radio" go off the air, indicating that Buddhist leaders are in danger. It now appears that these tactics are related to rumors of troop movements toward the Hue area, which Buddhist leaders apparently interpreted as a planned Saigon operation to retake Hue by force.

8. Three battalions of Vietnamese airborne and marine troops have landed at Phu Bai Airfield from the Da Nang area to participate in a scheduled operation with two battalions of the 1st Division against the Viet Cong on 8 June. There has been some speculation that these forces may be returned to the Hue area after the operation terminates.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

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2. It is already clear from COMUSMACV's figures on infiltration for 1966 that North Vietnam is sending in many more troops this year than in the past. The total number of confirmed, probable, and possible infiltrators reported for the first five months of 1966 already totals over 21,000-- more than the number accepted for all of 1965. In addition, there are another 16,000 infiltrators who have been reported by captives, but who do not yet meet the criteria for the confirmed, probable, or possible categories.

3. Given the time lag--sometimes as much as several months--in the reporting of new infiltration units or groups, it is possible that many more North Vietnamese have infiltrated in 1966 than are cited above. Many of the infiltrators who arrived in 1966 have undoubtedly been used as replacements or fillers for the substantial number of casualties sustained by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units. Nevertheless, North Vietnamese strength in South Vietnam continues to grow steadily. Slightly more than a third of the total VC/NVA Main Force strength (35,010 out of a total estimated strength of 97,455 men) is now confirmed as North Vietnamese. If the infiltrators reported in 1966 but not yet included in the Main Force strength are soon accepted, then North Vietnamese strength would exceed 50,000 and would constitute almost half of the VC/NVA Main Force.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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## V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. The Polish ICC representative, Ambassador Lewandowski, informed Ambassador Lodge on 6 June that he had discerned a "definite will for conversations" in Hanoi--presumably with the US--during his recent trip there. He told Ambassador Lodge that he had spent two hours with North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong. When pressed by the US ambassador, however, Lewandowski could not provide anything more concrete. He stated that he felt sure there was now a willingness to talk and to at least "make a list," presumably of points to be negotiated. When asked by the US ambassador whether he had any suggestions as to how such talks could be initiated, he said that he did not have anything specific.

2. The Poles have often pushed a similiarly vague but encouraging line in conversations with US officials on the subject of Hanoi's willingness to consider negotiations. Lewandowski has implied that he feels one of his main duties in his present assignment is to encourage negotiations.

### ICC Meeting in Hanoi

3. Lewandowski was in Hanoi for a formal meeting of the ICC which was held between 31 May and 4 June. This was the first such meeting to be held in Hanoi in over a year. The Canadian ICC commissioner had informed the US earlier that the ICC plans to hold more frequent meetings in Hanoi, perhaps on an average of once every three months. This decision was the outgrowth of hints dropped by the North Vietnamese who had asked why the commission did not meet more often in Hanoi. The Canadian commissioner stated that Hanoi's suggestion for more meetings in North Vietnam had not been accompanied by any evidence that the regime was prepared to take further steps to cooperate with the ICC or to permit the ICC to resume its inspection functions. The North Vietnamese insisted that the ICC pull back all of its inspection teams to Hanoi in February 1965 following the initiation of US air strikes on North Vietnam.

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